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## Fergus O'Connor and the Mermaid

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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## *Fergus O'Connor and the Mermaid*

"The fishing net is heavy filled,  
So rise it steady and slow --  
I'll have me haul to sell today,  
So heave, me fellows, ho!"

But strange to tell the net was filled  
Though they had caught few fish,  
For yet a mermaid in their web  
Was raised against her wish.

Her hair was yellow gold, green-flecked;  
Her skin, sun-tanned and hale;  
Her lips and nipples, a brownish rose;  
And golden green, her tail.

"I beg your pardon, holy one,  
That you be tangled so --"  
"Then loose the net, O fisherman,  
And let me silent go."

"Of course, of course, but first you'll give,  
In gratitude most rare,  
Likely a gift, a little thing,  
Since you're not shown at the fair?"

"What gift dost thou demand, my lord,  
Who holds my life in fee?"  
"Oh not so brutal is me hold --  
I'll ask but wishes three."

"My spells are ocean born, my lord;  
They do no touch elsewhere."  
"Myself am sure you'll shape them well,  
You'll spell with utmost care."

"Thy wish is my command, my lord;  
I'll try to do thy will."  
The sun was shining on the boat;  
The winds were almost still.

"I like the simple phrase 'me lord,'  
But fishers have no gold;  
Likely a chest or two of coin  
Would make me name extolled."

"That takes of magic none, my lord,  
For thirty fathoms deep,  
A galleon lies with gold enough  
To make the English weep."

"A lord needs power to prove his worth,  
Else all his gold is dumb;  
Whenever he his fingers snap,  
A dozen lords should come."

She cupped her hands within the net,  
And sang some words at will --  
Not Latin from an ancient scroll  
Nor Gaelic older still.

A dark cloud rose upon the verge,  
The breeze picked up a bit,  
The waves grew stronger in the wind --  
Against the boat they hit.

"And third, I'd like the gentry girl  
Who lives above the bay --  
Sole heir she is of that fine house,  
Of all that pride and sway."

The mermaid sang again her song,  
So soft, as the tide had ebbd;  
She raised her right hand in the net,  
Her fingers spread and webbed.

The cloud now covered half the sky,  
The wind was blowing strong;  
She smiled to see the rising waves  
Which with the storm belonged.

"You fool, you fool," she cried to him,  
"Kill me or kill me not --"  
The clouds have come, the winds are high,  
The waves rise at this spot.

"You fool, you fool, your death is here --  
You'll sink to gold below;  
A foolish girl will cry about  
Dead fishers she did not know."

"But power! me power! you gave me power --  
I'll make the storm hold fast."  
"The only power that you've received  
Is in the mighty blast."

by Joe R. Christopher